

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 17, 2009

The Honorable Linda Lingle  
Governor of Hawaii  
Executive Chambers, State Capitol  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Governor Lingle:

While we understand the gravity of the state's economic situation, your plan to furlough all state employees for three days per month for two years, which will reduce social services just when many Hawaii residents will need them most, is troubling. In particular, we are concerned about the furlough of the 36 employees of and 16 medical consultants under contract to the Disability Determination Branch (DDB) of the State of Hawaii Department of Human Services. These state employees are 100 percent funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and are critical to ensuring that pending claims for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are processed in a timely and appropriate manner.

We are informed that the three-day furlough of DDB employees will result in: a loss to Hawaii of SSA funding totaling \$79,500 per month (\$1.9 million over two years); delays of \$46,200 in benefit payments to new claimants per month; and delays in the processing of 123 new disability cases per month (2,952 over two years). We are also informed that in the current fiscal year the number of pending SSDI and SSI claims submitted by Hawaii residents is 15.8 percent higher so far this year compared to the total number of pending claims in the whole of the preceding fiscal year.


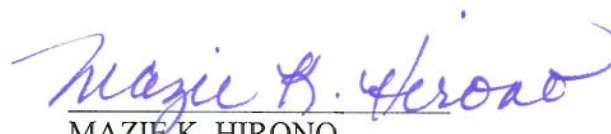
Any delay in processing valid SSDI claims will not only adversely impact the individuals concerned but also the State of Hawaii's budget because Medicaid and other state-funded programs must fill the gaps in coverage that SSDI and SSI would otherwise have filled.

We are informed that SSA funds that are used to pay DDB employees to process SSDI and SSI claims cannot be used for any other purpose. Accordingly, any funds left unused due to a furlough of DDB employees will be effectively reclaimed by SSA and directed to another political jurisdiction within Social Security's San Francisco Region (Arizona, California, Nevada, Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

We understand there are other state employees who are 100 percent funded by the federal government. Furloughing these employees will encumber the programs they serve while saving the state no money.

For all of the reasons cited, we urge you to reconsider your decision regarding the furlough of state employees, particularly as it applies to the state's DDB employees.

Sincerely,

  
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DANIEL K. INOUE  
U.S. Senator  
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DANIEL K. AKAKA  
U.S. Senator  
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NEIL ABERCROMBIE  
U.S. Representative  
First District, Hawaii  
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MAZIE K. HIRONO  
U.S. Representative  
Second District, Hawaii